

# **Mental Health and the Arts**

## **- A Laguna Collective Working Group -**

This working group, consisting of professionals of mental health and the arts, utilizes existing methodologies and explores new ways and strategies for the arts to be used with people experiencing mental health problems. This approach is based on evidence that shows the arts are vital for the health and overall well-being of people, and the growth of societies as a whole: the arts can be instrumental in creating pockets of breath, rest and healing.

Specifically, our working group gets together to strategize how we can foster and promote the effective use of the arts to create moments of relief, release, listening and witnessing, in a dramatically volatile and ever shifting socio-political world. What sort of new allyships can we build with the arts as the main tool of connection and communication? How can the arts help strengthen existing and create new local, community-led practices that can be owned by individuals, households, and communities in order to address the concerning burden of mental health problems that we are witnessing globally? How can we sustain the process of change, leaving people equipped with the ability to revisit these moments and strategies and continue to access the arts even after 'we' are gone? Our group works at answering these questions through regular meetings and close collaborations with a variety of diverse practitioners across the globe experienced in working at the international, national, and grassroots levels.

Our first phase of working puts a specific focus on survivors of sexual and gender-based violence on the one hand, and the wellbeing of staff working for humanitarian and development organizations on the other. We will expand our focus and include further population and occupation groups over time.